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ABSTRACT

Replicating two previous studies of the transition process of students in field experience programs, this study examined the reactions or feelings that fifth-year graduate student teachers experience, and compared them with those of early field experience and undergraduate student teachers. During their first semester, the teachers kept journals in which they recorded their reactions and feelings as they observed in public schools and participated in various teaching duties. In the second semester, four student teachers kept a formatted journal on their reactions to the teaching role and made at least weekly comments. The study confirmed the analysis of the two previous studies and ascertained six themes that dominate the transition process of being socialized into teaching: (1) teaching metaphor; (2) relationships of teaching; (3) transition to teaching; (4) reflection of teaching; (5) realities of teaching; and (6) teaching practice. (JD)

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THE JOURNAL AS A RESEARCH TOOL: ADDED DIMENSIONS

Introduction

The field experience is considered the most valued and important aspect of teacher education programs (Lortie, 1975; Appleberry, 1976; Dispoto, 1980; Koehler, 1986). This experience can last a short number of weeks or extend to months of practice, but somewhere in that socialization period the student teacher becomes a teacher. However, there has always been difficulty in identifying when the transition from student teacher to teacher occurs.

A foundational study by Bowman (1987) and a follow-up study by Hall 1988, documented in Hall and Bowman (1989) have attempted to identify the transition process of students in field experience programs. This study is a replication of these studies. It examines the reactions or feelings that fifth year graduate student teachers experience, and compares these reactions with those of early field experience and undergraduate student teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this third study was to examine teacher socialization of pre-student teachers and student teachers in a fifth year graduate teacher education program. Using the journal as a research tool, perceptions were evaluated to determine what student teachers experience as they become teachers.

Background of the Study

The two previous studies were conducted with undergraduate secondary education students. In the foundation study, pre-student teachers were participating in a field experience that culminated in teaching a five day unit. In the follow-up study, undergraduate secondary students were engaged in a ten week student teaching

experience. Student teacher's content areas were in English, mathematics, history, home economics, music, foreign language, science, business, industrial technology, and physical education.

For the foundation study methods of inquiry were (a) observation, (b) interviews with pre-student teachers and their cooperating teachers, and (c) journals kept by the pre-student teachers and the researcher. A format was provided for the journal entries so that students could focus on their feelings as they worked at becoming a teacher.

Seven themes were detected: (a) teaching metaphor, (b) teaching motivation--why teach, (c) relationships of teaching, (d) transition to teaching--neither a student nor a teacher, (e) realities of teaching, (f) reflection of teaching, and (g) teaching practice. Under each theme propositions were listed. Journals were used to analyze all themes except the theme "teaching motivation--why teach." Other inquiry methods corroborated journal entries but did not yield additional information. (Bowman, 1987))

The follow up study with undergraduate student teachers used an analysis of journals and enumerated the six themes used in the foundation study with journals. These themes were (a) teaching metaphor, (b) relationships of teaching, (c) transition to teaching-neither a student nor a teacher, (d) reflection of teaching, (e) realities of teaching, and (f) teaching practice. Propositions for each theme are given below. Asterisked statements were added from the second study.

A. Teaching Metaphor
   1. Pre-student teachers approach teaching metaphorically.
   2. Pre-student teachers experience satisfaction with their teaching experience to the degree that they are able to act in conjunction with their teaching metaphor.
   *3. Student teachers find satisfaction in the achievements of their students.
   *4. Student teachers experience a metaphor shift.

B. Relationships of Teaching

1. Pre-student teachers explain how they relate to high school students, cooperating teachers, and other faculty and staff.
2. Pre-student teachers explain how high school students, cooperating teachers, and other faculty and staff relate to them.
3. Pre-student teachers have confidence in themselves as teachers to the degree that students, cooperating teachers and faculty treat them like their image of teachers.
*4. Student teachers experience attachment to their students.

C. Transition of Teaching--Neither a Student Nor a Teacher
1. Pre-student teacher experience a transition period in which they feel like they are no longer a student and not yet a teacher.
*2. Student teachers discover they have authority.
*3. Student teachers discover they can manage the classroom without the help of the cooperating teacher.

D. Realities of Teaching
1. Pre-student teachers discover some of the realities of the amount of preparation and flexibility involved in teaching.
2. Pre-student teachers discover the reality that a few students and teachers have poor attitudes.
*3. Student teachers discover the realities of non-teaching duties.

E. Reflection of Teaching
1. Pre-student teachers approach teaching reflectively.
2. Pre-student teachers find the observation of teaching is valuable to them to the extent that they reflect on their observations.
3. Pre-student teachers reflect about the value of observation, teaching practices of the teachers they observe, their own teaching practices, and how high school students learn best.

F. Teaching Practice
   1. Pre-student teachers are satisfied with their field experience to the extent that they have opportunity to practice teaching
   2. Pre-student teachers are satisfied with their field experience to the extent that they have opportunity to practice a variety of teaching duties.

Procedures

In this third study, four fifth year California State University, Chico graduate student teachers participated among 17 who were student teaching in the Chico Public School District secondary schools. A semester of pre-student teaching (16 weeks for a minimum of 10 hours per week) culminated in a two week teach in. A second semester (20 weeks) of directed student teaching comprised the second field experience for these student teachers. Two of the student teachers were in a junior high school setting and two were in a high school setting. All students were female and their subject areas were English, Social Science, Math, and Science.

During their first semester, all student teachers were asked to keep a journal in which they were to record their reactions and feelings as they observed in the public schools and participated in various teaching duties. A format was not given to student teachers; however, it was stressed that regular checks would be made of journals to ascertain if their reading, observation, and practice in the classrooms was being reflected on and written down.

In the second semester of their student teaching, the researcher asked the four student teachers she was supervising to keep a formatted journal (Appendix A) on their reactions to the teaching role and make at least weekly comments. As in the previous studies, the constant comparative method established by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and later by Lincoln and Guba (1985), was used to collect and analyze data. An audit trail was kept to explain the analysis process.

Analysis

First, student journals were read and analyzed for the respective themes. The computer was used to record entries and code sources for each theme. All entries were further studied to determine accuracy of placement under a theme, or to evaluate entries for the propositions that correlated to each theme. Those entries that did not fit established propositions were placed in a separate file for further consideration.

As in the previous study (1989) it was clear that all themes and proposition were represented after initial tabulation. Those entries that did not fit the established propositions were reassessed for inclusion with the six original themes.

No new themes were determined; however, new propositions were added to the following three themes:

B. Relationships of Teaching
   5. Student teachers explain their concerns about contacting or conferencing with student's parents

D. Realities of Teaching
   4. Student teachers discover the need for flexible expectations of students.

E. Reflection of Teaching
   4. Student teachers reflect on theory as it pertains to practice.

Discussion

This study would confirm the analysis of the two previous studies and ascertain that there are six themes that seem to dominate the transition process of student teachers as they are socialized into the teacher role. Fifth year secondary education graduate students voice the same experiences as their counterparts in undergraduate secondary education while they proceed through their field experiences. The researchers believe the added propositions reflect the extended length (nine months) of the field experience for the graduate student teacher.

It became apparent that the journal can serve as a valuable research tool. Using either a formatted or non-formatted journal, student teachers were able to reflect their perceptions about the teaching act. The formatted approach does produce shorter entries.

This third study would agree with the hypothesis that was generated in the previous study (1989) that the process of becoming a teacher is cyclic. There seem to be discernable patterns or events that pre-student, undergraduate, and graduate student teachers perceive as they reflect on their roles in the process of becoming a teacher. These themes are repeated many times during the course of a student teacher's field experiences. This research has implications for all field experience teacher education programs.

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